

October 11, 2010

Tom Gorman  
Director  
Rocky Mountain HIDTA  
10200 E. Girard Avenue  
Denver, CO 80231

Re: Nomination of Washington County Drug Task Force as Outstanding Task Force

Dear Director Gorman:

It is an honor to nominate the Washington County Drug Task Force (WCDTF) for Rocky Mountain HIDTA's outstanding Task Force. The WCDTF is comprised of exceptionally dedicated and hardworking team members who have produced outstanding results combating drug trafficking organizations in southern Utah.

The wilderness areas located in the mountains of Washington County have been an increasingly popular location for marijuana farms. In recent years, the WCDTF in cooperation with other agencies has successfully eradicated several marijuana grows, resulting in multiple arrests, the eradication of hundreds of plants and dried bud, and the seizure of several firearms.

However, the summer of 2010 was the WCDTF's busiest year yet. The WCDTF lead the effort to disrupt and dismantle six different marijuana grows throughout Washington County. These marijuana grows were located in remote mountainous areas. In some areas, the terrain was so steep and the trees and brush so thick that reaching the marijuana grows was treacherous. The presence of armed men patrolling the perimeter of the grows increased the danger of the surveillance and eradication operation.

In previous years, marijuana grow eradication efforts used a mass-invasion technique. This year, the Task Force implemented a stealthier, tactical approach which used surprise to produce more arrests than ever before.

The Task Force's efforts produced 14 arrests, the seizure of 3 guns and 2 vehicles, and the removal of 33,250 marijuana plants plus 500 pounds of processed marijuana bud. The six grows eradicated this year were sophisticated operations that appear to be coordinated by a central organization. Among those arrested were at least three individuals believed to be significant players in the organization's management. Investigative work is continuing in an effort identify and remove the source.

Because Washington County is located on the borders of Arizona and Nevada, the Task Force routinely cooperates and assists with multi-state investigations. During the year, the WCDTF has teamed with and assisted multiple agencies throughout the region and across state lines, including the Utah Major Crimes Task Force; the Mesquite, Nevada Drug Task Force; the Iron/Garfield Drug Task Force; the Mohave County, Arizona Sheriff's Office; the D.E.A.; I.C.E.; the Las Vegas Metro Police; the United States Attorney's Office; the United States Forest Service; the Utah Highway Patrol; and D.C.F.S.

Even though Washington County is a small jurisdiction, the WCDTF has a huge impact on disrupting drug trafficking organizations throughout southern Utah and the northern regions of Arizona and Nevada.

For example, working with partners in Nevada, the WCDTF busted a major drug trafficking organization lead by Jordan Lucia that supplied heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine to St. George. Under pressure from the Task Force, Lucia moved to Las Vegas, but continued to deliver and deal in Utah. After substantial investigation, the Task Force arrested Lucia for distribution of heroin, seized his vehicle and recovered five firearms, including three stolen weapons. The Task Force was able to identify and arrest several of Lucia's lieutenants.

The WCDTF is a team of dynamic and competent individuals from several local law enforcement agencies who are committed to cooperatively and effectively disrupting the flow of illegal drugs and interrupting the efforts of drug trafficking organizations. The Task Force members bring dedication, innovation, and enthusiasm to their work. The Task Force regularly develops strong cases that produce successful prosecutions.

We are proud of the hard work and success of the Washington County Drug Task Force. Thank you for your consideration of their nomination as Rocky Mountain HIDTA's Outstanding Task Force.

Sincerely,

Brock Belnap  
County Attorney

Zachary Weiland  
Deputy County Attorney  
Task Force Prosecutor

Eric Gentry  
Deputy County Attorney  
Task Force Prosecutor